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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

4 Jun 61
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Executive Registry
101-5772

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, USIB

SUBJECT: Military Intelligence Deficiencies in Southeast Asia

There is grave concern in the Department of Defense about the serious deficiencies in military intelligence in Southeast Asia. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have advised the Secretary of Defense that collection emphasis must be placed upon basic items of intelligence which are essential to the development of accurate and meaningful intelligence estimates.

Although certain intelligence on that area has been extremely useful from a military standpoint, the lack of current, detail information about Communist forces has been one of the factors adversely affecting the operations of the Laotian Armed Forces. Repeated Communist violations of the truce in Laos demonstrate the continuing nature of our need. Even with a complete suspension of hostilities, moreover, we do not believe that the requirement for more and better intelligence on Laos and neighboring countries would be substantially reduced. The steadily deteriorating situation, the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention, and the consequent possibility of U.S. contingency operations make it imperative that greater effort be made to collect military information in that area.

The magnitude of these intelligence deficiencies may be judged from the inclosed list of unsatisfied priority military intelligence requirements, which include items of vital importance to possible military operations in that area. It is fully appreciated that this matter has been under discussion at high levels within State, Defense and CIA and that special efforts are now being directed at satisfying the most urgent requirements. Within Defense there is also awareness of the comprehensive nature of this list and the practical impossibility of achieving more than partial satisfaction of the deficiencies listed. Nonetheless, the seriousness of the problem clearly indicates that this is a matter deserving of the most careful attention in USIB.

It is suggested that such assets as might be held by individual members of the intelligence community might profitably be reviewed within USIB for a determination of their effectiveness in providing the intelligence urgently required by current developments in Southeast Asia.

OSD REVIEW COMPLETED

1 Inclosure
JCSM-373-61

CC to Dir, J-2, JCS
w/o incl

James B. Erskine
GRAVES B. ERSKINE
General, USMC (Ret)
Assistant to the
Secretary of Defense
(Special Operations)

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22 June 61

PRIORITY MILITARY INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS ON
COMMUNIST CHINA, LAOS AND NORTH VIETNAM (C)

I. GROUND FORCES.

Determination of capabilities and likely courses of action of the Communist forces in the Southeast Asia area requires complete and current order of battle information, important aspects of which are unit identifications and locations. Data concerning organization, tactics, training, and logistics on the principal units are also essential to estimating capabilities of the Communist military forces.

The Communist forces' effective security and counterintelligence measures, the limited Western contact with the area in which units may be stationed, and reports of questionable or unknown veracity make this type of information very difficult to acquire, and to confirm.

Therefore, collection emphasis must be placed upon those basic items of intelligence which are essential to developing accurate and meaningful intelligence estimates. It has become increasingly obvious that greater clandestine collection effort is the sole means by which many of these essential information needs may be satisfied.

SOUTH COMMUNIST CHINA (YUNNAN PROVINCE)

One of the primary requirements in Southeast Asia is intelligence on the Chinese Communist ground forces in Yunnan Province.

These forces are judged capable of undertaking independent actions anywhere in Southeast Asia and of impairing seriously US interests there. The development of accurate and dependable intelligence estimates regarding the capabilities and likely courses of action of these forces is a continuing objective of high priority in Army Intelligence.

The capabilities of the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Yunnan Province are known in general terms. The information from which these capabilities are judged is obtained largely from covert sources, and intermittently, from open sources, such as newspapers and

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other periodicals. The intelligence information received from these collection resources lacks timeliness. Since the bulk of US information comes from these sources significant portions of the finished intelligence based on it are necessarily tentative.

A more serious deficiency, however, is the lack of continuing information to maintain intelligence on the forces which have been confirmed and accepted, and to confirm tentative acceptances which frequently may be based upon either old or incomplete information. The intelligence needs resulting from this deficiency are illustrated in the specific intelligence requirements which follow:

- a. Current order of battle information on PLA units in Yunnan Province: identification, strength, location, organization, and equipment of independent artillery units (last information on independent artillery units was reported approximately five years ago); location, identification and movement of regimental and battalion size combat elements, especially in the vicinity of the border; information on location and identification of border defense units; location of 13th Army and its subordinate divisions and regiments; cover designators for all units.
- b. The tactical doctrine, state of training, morale, discipline, and loyalty of individual units in Yunnan Province to permit assessment of their combat effectiveness, and provide indications of which units may be designated to participate in a Southeast Asian offensive.
- c. The subordination, operational chain-of-command, method of coordinating operations and assigning responsibilities of the border defense units; the estimated effectiveness of border defense measures under normal circumstances or under conditions of limited war affecting the over-all status of border security along the boundaries with Burma and Laos.

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d. The location and support capabilities of PLA logistical installations in Yunnan Province, including delivery and replenishment data.

e. The current condition and capacity of lines of communication in or into Yunnan Province, particularly Muong Sing (Laos) - Ch'e-li (Yunnan); Tapom (Burma) - Ta-lo (Yunnan); Kunlong (Burma) - Men-ting (Yunnan) - Myitkyina (Burma) - Pao-shan (Yunnan).

f. The location, curriculum, subordination and size of schools in Yunnan Province training agents for operations in the neighboring nations of southeast Asia.

NORTH VIETNAM

Accurate intelligence on the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) equals in importance that required on Communist China's PLA units in Yunnan Province. Again, however, the development of meaningful estimates is hampered by the lack of information on basic intelligence subjects. Intelligence on the major units of the PAVN located in the Northwest military zone and the area adjacent to the Demarcation Line (17th parallel) is judged to be fairly reliable. Currently, intelligence on the remaining major units of the PAVN, believed to be located mainly in the Hanoi delta area, is not considered adequate, primarily because of the absence of recent information sufficiently detailed to provide essential order of battle data.

Current priority intelligence requirements needed to permit sound assessments pertaining to the capabilities, effectiveness, and intentions of the PAVN are as follows:

a. Movements and tactical locations of divisions in the Northwest military zone and the area adjacent to the 17th parallel; strength, identification, organization, location, and movement of division in the Hanoi delta area.

b. Confirmation of the existence and the location of the 332 Infantry Division, last held in 1960 at Lang Son (XK-61).

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c. PAVN order of battle information showing specifically the organization of divisions and their subordinate units, the location and tactical positioning of armor and artillery, and the armament and equipment of units and individuals.

d. Evidence or indications of the activation or reactivation by the PAVN Army of Intelligence and reconnaissance units or topographic survey battalions.

e. The nature and extent of CBR training in the PAVN Army, especially to include the source of the CBR equipment used.

f. Military engineer activities in the Thanh Hoa area, including whether involved in support of research and development activities; engineer construction on the Song Ma railroad bridge.

g. Information relating to visitors to North Vietnam, particularly military visitors; information on the movements of PAVN senior commanders, especially into the Hanoi area.

LAOS

The Communist Forces in Northern Laos, supported by both tactical and logistical elements of the Sino-Soviet bloc military forces, constitute a grave threat to the security of the whole of Southeast Asia. The urgency of the current critical situation in Laos has intensified the demands for day-to-day estimates concerning the capabilities, effectiveness, and likely courses of action of the Communist Forces active in the Plaine des Jarres area. These estimates contribute significantly to the support of US judgements having world-wide importance.

There is a continuing lack in the flow of intelligence information on order of battle data and the military activities of the Communist Forces in Laos; information urgently needed to increase the timeliness and significance of intelligence estimates developed on these forces. Current information gaps are reflected in the priority intelligence requirements below:

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- a. Specific information concerning strength, location, organization, composition, and equipment of Communist Forces in the Plaine des Jarres area and in central Laos.
- b. Information on strength, identification, location, composition, and nature of activity associated with North Vietnamese units in Laos or in the Lao-Vietnam border area.
- c. Information on troop deployment, troop tactical training, and other basic tactical preparations - offensive or defensive - sufficiently detailed or documented to provide data required in developing assessments on the status of Communist Forces military capabilities, of a conventional, unconventional or psychological nature, in the Plaine des Jarres area and in central Laos.
- d. Information on logistical factors affecting Communist Forces operations in Laos, including existence, condition, and capacity of bridges; traffic density on the main supply route from North Vietnam; type of cargo being moved; and the location, size and composition of supply installations.
- e. Information concerning tactical and strategic weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the Communist Forces which could be exploited through psychological and unconventional warfare operations.

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II. NAVAL FORCES

1. Priority naval intelligence requirements are related to possible intervention of Chinese Communist forces in the area and the consequently increasing possibility of US naval forces involvement in contingency operations.

2. The two critical needs of COMSEVENTHFLT during these conditions are firm intelligence concerning Chinese Communist military activities in South China and Hainan Island areas and adequate intelligence on which to produce target materials in these areas.

3. Specific over-all interests in South China are:

a. The area from the airfield at Nanning, to Liuchow, Canton (Whitecloud) and Suichi, Fort Bayard harbor and the whole of Hainan Island.

b. Specific targets in Hainan: port and harbor facilities at Haikow, Yulin and Pasuo.

c. Airfields on Hainan.

d. Deployment of ChiCom submarines, including duration and scope of operations.

e. Photo reconnaissance of the littoral from Hangcho Bay south through Hainan Island.

f. Photo reconnaissance on South China and North Vietnam to provide intelligence on lines of communication and naval operating areas.

4. Other priority requirements are:

a. Mine Warfare. Information on types and characteristics of ChiCom mines and on concepts of mine warfare.

b. Operations. Information on ChiCom naval operational patterns (surface and submarines) and on joint operations with other naval forces, particularly the USSR and North Vietnam.

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c. North Vietnam. Location of naval units near the North Vietnam--South Vietnam border area and scope of their operations.

d. ChiCom Naval Air. Is a naval airfield being built in the Yulin/Sanya area on the south coast of Hainan Island? If so, what naval air units will be located there? Does the ChiCom naval air force have rockets or air-to-air missiles? Nuclear weapons? What is the mission of the jet light-bomber force? What are the ASW capabilities of the naval air force? What is the organizational structure, strength and disposition of the ChiCom naval air arm?

e. Amphibious intelligence on Haiphong-Dosan area, North Vietnam.

f. Current employment and estimate of combat potential of ChiCom amphibious forces.

III. Air Forces

1. Communist China: A continuing requirement exists for current information regarding Chinese Communist bomber aircraft deployment and the operational use and capabilities of military airfields in south and southeast China. Information is also needed on air defense capabilities, including: radar order of battle; location of fighter units, particularly the appearance of MIG-19 and other high-performance fighters or air-to-air missiles; locations of control facilities; and plans and responsibilities for coordinating air defense activities and elements in China, Laos and North Vietnam.

2. Laos: Information on air capabilities, air order of battle, and major airfield construction or changes in operational status or capability.

3. North Vietnam: Information is needed regarding the actual total and type of aircraft in North Vietnam, including both local and transient traffic by aircraft type and country of

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registration. Continuing requirements exist for information on: airfield capabilities and construction; type, numbers and locations of radar being employed in North Vietnam; locations of control centers, installations and military headquarters; training being given to Pathet Lao forces; and communications organization, direction and facilities.

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Remarks:

Subject to your approval, the Secretariat proposes to circulate General Erskine's letter (and enclosure) to USIB for review and discussion at an early Board meeting.

OK AWD/kmc

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Acting Executive Secretary

DDI should then ensure
that CIA elements are
made aware of this
requirement. CPc (6/23/61)

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